

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 SSM-05 OPR-02

CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 SCCT-01 /093 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/P:EOJONES
APPROVED BY NEA/P:EOJONES
S/PRS - MR. FUNSETH (INFO)
H - MR. FLATEN (INFO)
EUR/P - MR. JERABEK
IO/P - MR. BLACHLY
SSM - MR. MC ANDREW
NEA/ARP - MR. DICKMAN
AF/P - MR. POPE
NEA - MS. GRIFFIN

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
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AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
USMISSION SINAI
CINCEUR

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GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL, CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - JULY 23

1.
FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS
FROM DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S PRESS BRIEFING FOR JULY 23,
1976:

Q. THE QUESTION, FRED--IN THIS MORNING'S PAPER MR. EVANS
AND NOVAK, WITH A GREAT WEALTH OF DETAILS, MAINTAIN THAT
THERE IS ACUTE CONCERN IN THE ADMINISTRATION OVER THE PO SI-
BILITY THAT THE PLO AND ITS LEADER, MR. ARAFAT, ARE HOLDING
AMERICANS AND OTHER FOREIGN NATIONALS AS VIRTUAL HOSTAGES
IN BEIRUT. IS THERE INDEED SUCH CONCERN FELT IN THE ADMINI-
STRATION?

A. I WENT INTO THIS IN SOME DETAIL YESTERDAY AND GAVE YOU
OUR REASONS FOR POSTPONING THE EVACUATION. WE ARE HAVING
DAILY EXCHANGES WITH ALL THE PARTIES CONCERNED REGARDING
THE SITUATION IN LEBANON. WE ARE NOT GOING TO TALK ABOUT
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THESE EXCHANGES OR GO INTO ANY OTHER DETAILS UNTIL THE
EVACUATION IS COMPLETED. AND I WOULD JUST LIKE TO UNDER-
LINE THAT THE EVACUATION WILL BE COMPLETED, AND UNTIL IT IS
OVER AND DONE WITH WE ARE SIMPLY NOT GOING TO GO INTO OTHER
ASPECTS OF IT.

Q. FRED, THE QUESTION IS NOT ABOUT THE EXCHANGES, THE
QUESTION IS ABOUT OUR APPRAISAL--THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S
APPRAISAL--OF WHAT IS GOING ON. AND WITH ALL RESPECT,
WE ARE TALKING ABOUT AT LEAST THE SAFETY AND POSSIBLY THE
LIVES OF A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF AMERICANS INCLUDING
OFFICIALS.

I WONDER WHETHER IT IS PROPER TO REFUSE ALL COMMENT ON THAT. IT'S A SERIOUS QUESTION.

A. I KNOW IT IS A SERIOUS QUESTION AND I HAVE GIVEN YOU OUR EXPLANATION OF THE SITUATION.

I AM NOT GOING TO GO INTO SPECULATION OR ANY DIGRESSION ON IT. WE EXPECT THE EVACUATION TO BE COMPLETED AND OUR PARAMOUNT AIM IS TO GET THESE AMERICANS WHO WANT TO DEPART, OUT OF BEIRUT SAFELY, AND AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

AND I THINK IT IS WORTH MENTIONING, ALSO, THAT THIS IS NOT ONLY OUR CONCERN, BUT THE CONCERN OF OTHER NATIONS WHOSE CITIZENS ARE IN BEIRUT, AND THEY SHARE OUR PURPOSE.

Q. THE MAJOR THRUST OF THE COLUMN OR THE COLUMN CERTAINLY UNDERSCORES HOW IMPORTANTLY THE PLO FIGURES IN THIS RESCUE EFFORT--THIS EVACUATION EFFORT.

A. YES.

Q. SO FIRST LET ME ASK YOU IF YOUR DAILY EXCHANGES INVOLVE EXCHANGES WITH THE PLO; AND IF YOUR RESPONSE IS WHAT IT HAS BEEN UNTIL NOW, HOW CAN YOU NOT HAVE DAILY EXCHANGES WITH THE PLO IF, INDEED, AS YOU SEE DEMONSTRATED IN THIS COLUMN AGAIN, THE PLO IS A VERY DIRECT PART OF THIS SITUATION?

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A. BARRY, WE ARE IN CONTACT WITH THE VARIOUS PARTIES WHO ARE IN LEBANON. I AM NOT GOING TO BE SPECIFIC AND I THINK IT HAS BEEN STATED PREVIOUSLY, THAT WE HAVE NOT HAD CONTACT WITH THE PLO. AND I AM NOT GOING TO EXPAND ON THAT. (SEE CLARIFICATION AT END OF TRANSCRIPT)

Q. IS THAT STILL TRUE?

A. IT IS TRUE. WE ARE ENGAGED IN TALKING TO ALL THE PARTIES.

Q. BUT NOT THE PLO?

A. I THINK THAT HAS BEEN STATED AND MADE VERY CLEAR BEFORE.

Q. NO--YOU JUST SAID THAT TODAY.

A. I AM SAYING WE ARE IN CONTACT WITH THE VARIOUS PARTIES THAT HAVE AN INTEREST IN THE SITUATION THERE ON THE GROUND. WE ARE MAKING OUR JUDGMENTS BASED ON WHAT INFORMATION WE RECEIVE FROM THEM AND WE ARE MAKING DECISIONS WITH REGARD TO THE EVACUATION ON THE BASIS OF THAT INFORMATION.

AND I AM NOT GOING TO EXPAND ON THAT.

Q. FRED, DON'T YOU THINK THE PLO IS ON THE--ONE OF THE PARTIES ON THE GROUND?

A. I AM NOT GOING TO GO BEYOND UHAT I HAVE SAID SO FAR.

Q. BUT YOU SAID, "ALL THE PARTIES" AND THE PLO IS A PARTY.

ARE YOU IN CONTACT WITH THE PLO THROUGH A SECOND PARTY?

A. NO, I AM JUST GOING TO STICK ON WHAT I HAVE SAID, IF I MAY.

Q. BUT FRED, CAN WE BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT YOU HAVE SAID? I HEARD YOU SAY SIMPLY THAT IT HAS BEEN SAID BEFORE THAT WE HAVE NOT HAD CONTACT WITH THE PLO--

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A. THAT HAS BEEN SAID.

Q. WE KNOW IT HAS BEEN SAID. THAT'S TRUE, IT HAS BEEN SAID.

A. RIGHT.

Q. BUT YOU ARE RELUCTANT TO SAY NOW THAT WE HAVE NOT HAD ANY COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE PLO. IS THAT WHERE WE ARE?

A. NO, I AM NOT RELUCTANT AT ALL.

Q. WELL CAN YOU TELL US --

A. I HAVE SAID THAT WE ARE IN CONTACT MITH THE PARTIES CONCERNED, AND WE ARE NOT GOING TO GO INTO DETAILS ON THOSE CONTACTS, OR PROVIDE ANY OTHER INFORMATION UNTIL THE EVACUATION IS SAFELY CARRIED OFF.

AND I THINK THAT IS A VERY, UNDERSTANDABLE POSITION ON OUR PART, NOT TO GO FURTHER ON IT.

Q. BUT WILL YOU ANSWER THE QUESTION WHETHER THERE'S --

Q. IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE--BUT MY PROBLEM HERE IS THAT IF WE ARE IN CONTACT WITH THE PARTIES CONCERNED--AND I THINK AT ONE POINT YOU SAID "ALL" THE PARTIES CONCERNED ALTHOUGH I MIGHT STAND CORRECTED ON THAT.

AND THAT, ERGO, MEANS THE PLO.

A. I HAVE SAID WE ARE IN CONTACT WITH THE PARTIES CONCERN-
ED. (SEE CLARIFICATION AT END OF TRANSCRIPT)

Q. YOU SAID, "ALL PARTIES".

A. WELL YOU CAN SAY "THE PARTIES" OR "ALL PARTIES".

Q. YOU SAID, "ALL".

A. ALL RIGHT.
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Q. WHICH WOULD INCLUDE --

Q. THERE IS NO PROBLEM LATER?

A. AND I AM NOT MAKING THAT INCLUSIVE, OR EXCLUSIVE.
RIGHT?

Q. BUT IT BECOMES INCLUSIVE. IT BECOMES INCLUSIVE.

Q. IF YOU SAY, "ALL PARTIES", YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT THE
PLO. IT BECOMES INCLUSIVE--THERE IS NOT--THERE IS NO WAY,
THERE IS JUST NO ALTERNATIVE.

A. LET'S JUST LEAVE IT THE WAY WE ORIGINALLY STATED IT:
THAT WE ARE IN CONTACT WITH THE PARTIES CONCERNED AND WE
ARE NOT GOING TO GO INTO ANY KIND OF DETAILED DISCUSSION--

Q. EXCUSE ME, MY NOTES SAY, "ALL THE PARTIES CONCERNED".

A. WELL YOU CAN LEAVE YOUR NOTES THAT WAY IF YOU WISH.

ALL RIGHT, LET'S JUST LEAVE IT AT THAT.

Q. COULD YOU REPEAT FOR US THAT THE UNITED STATES IS NOT
IN DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE PLO?

A. I CAN REPEAT THAT, YES.(SEE CLARIFICATION AT END OF
TRANSCRIPT)

Q. YOU CAN?

A. YES.

AGO?
AGO?

A. ALL RIGHT.

Q. "NOT IN DIRECT CONTACT", IS THAT THE WORD?

A. THAT IS CORRECT.

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Q. NOW, CAN YOU TELL US WHETHER THE UNITED STATES IS IN "INDIRECT" CONTACT WITH THE PLO?

A. JOE, I AM NOT GOING TO GO ANY FURTHER THAN WHAT I HAVE SAID. ALL RIGHT, LET'S JUST LEAVE IT AT THAT. WE CAN QUIBBLE ALL DAY ON "ALL EXCLUSIVE, INCLUSIVE" OR WHAT HAVE YOU.

BUT I THINK IT IS REALLY PRETTY CLEAR, JUST TO RECAP:

DAILY EXCHANGE WITH THE PARTIES CONCERNED. I AM NOT GOING TO TALK ABOUT THESE EXCHANGES UNTIL THE EVACUATION IS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED. AND WE INTEND TO GO AHEAD WITH IT AT THE APPROPRIATE TIME, BASED ON OUR BEST JUDGMENT OF THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND.

Q. FRED, I BET YOU THINK THAT DOES IT (LAUGHTER).

WELL, I HAVE ANOTHER QUESTION: THE DEFINITION OF THE PLO, YOU KNOW, HAS ALWAYS BEEN A SLIPPERY THING.

A. YES.

Q. SO LET ME JUST MAKE IT VERY SIMPLE: WHEN YOU SAY WE HAVE NOT BEEN IN CONTACT WITH THE PLO--WE HAVE NOT BEEN IN CONTACT WITH ANY ELEMENT OF THE PLO? IS THAT CORRECT? (SEE CLARIFICATION AT END OF TRANSCRIPT)

A. BARRY, WE HAVE GONE AROUND AND AROUND ON THIS DEFINITION OF CONTACT, DIRECT, INDIRECT, ETC. I REALLY DON'T WANT TO SAY ANYMORE ON THIS TODAY.

Q. BUT I MEAN, THE PLO IS AN UMBRELLA GROUP--

A. YES.

Q. AND ITS MEMBERSHIP CHANGES AS BEFITTING A PARTICULAR SITUATION OR A STRATEGIC NEED.

A. YES.

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Q. OR OTHER ACTS.

A. YES.

Q. WHEN YOU SAY YOU ARE NOT IN CONTACT WITH THE PLO, ARE YOU NOT IN CONTACT WITH ANY PART OF THE ORGANIZATION THAT

CALLS ITSELF THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION?

A. BARRY, YOU KNOW, I WOULD JUST REALLY LIKE TO LEAVE IT THE WAY WE HAVE IT.

Q. THERE IS SOME DISPUTE OVER WHETHER GEORGE HABASH IS IN THE PLO RIGHT NOW, OR NOT.

A. YES.

I REALLY CANNOT GET INTO A DISCUSSION OF THE VARIOUS PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATIONS.

Q. OH, I DON'T WANT YOU TO. BUT WILL YOU RULE OUT ANY CONTACT WITH ANY PLO ELEMENT?

A. I THINK WE HAVE RULED THAT OUT. SO LET'S JUST LEAVE IT AT THAT. O.K.?

Q. IS PLO ACQUIESCENCE A PREREQUISITE FOR SAFE EVACUATION OF AMERICANS FROM LEBANON?

A. I AM NOT GOING TO GO BEYOND WHAT I HAVE SAID ON THIS.

Q. INDIRECT ACQUIESCENCE?

A. I AM NOT GOING TO GO ANY FURTHER THAN WHAT I HAVE SAID ON THIS.

Q. FRED, DO YOU THINK THAT THE PLO HAS AN INTEREST ON THE GROUND?

A. I'M SORRY, FRANCOIS, WOULD YOU SAY THAT AGAIN?

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Q. DO YOU THINK THE PLO HAS AN INTEREST ON THE GROUND?

A. I AM NOT GOING TO CHARACTERIZE THE ATTITUDES OR INTERESTS OF THE PLO.

Q. HOW ABOUT EVANS AND NOVAK NOW?

A. O.K., MARVIN?

Q. ARE YOU HOPEFUL FOR AN EVACUATION IMMINENTLY?

A. I HAVE NO INDICATION THAT IT IS ABSOLUTELY IMMINENT. AS I SAY, THIS IS A QUESTION FOR THE EMBASSY TO EVALUATE, AND I HAVE NO INDICATION THAT IT IS "IMMINENT" IF BY THAT YOU MEAN IN THE NEXT TWELVE OR TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.

Q. WOULD YOU SAY THE THREE MAJOR METHODS OF EVACUATION ARE STILL UNDER CONSIDERATION--MEANING GROUND, AIR AND SEA--AND GIVING ABOUT EQUAL DUE AT THIS POINT--EQUAL CONSIDERATION?

A. AT THE MOMENT, OUR PLANNING IS STILL BASED ON THE IDEA OF THE LAND CONVOY, BARRY.

WE ARE NOT GOING TO RULE OUT OTHER ALTERNATIVES SHOULD THEY PROVE MORE PRACTICAL. BUT AGAIN, THIS IS A JUDGMENT CALL BY THE EMBASSY IN BEIRUT.

Q. YES.

Q. FRED, DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT THAT HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED BY MR. JUMBLATT IN BEIRUT, OR IN LEBANON?

A. NO, I REALLY DO NOT HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT THAT.

Q. HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE SIGNED UP FOR THE CONVOY OF ALL NATIONALITIES?

A. I WAS ASKED THAT QUESTION YESTERDAY, AND I WAS TOLD THAT THE NUMBER WE GAVE FOR THE JULY 20 EVACUATION IS STILL UNCLASSIFIED

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THE NUMBER WE ARE CARRYING. I DO NOT HAVE THE NUMBER WITH ME, BUT IT WAS POSTED YESTERDAY.

DO YOU HAVE THAT, BARRY?

Q. YES, IT WAS, AND IT STATED THAT IT STAYED THE SAME.

A. IT STAYED THE SAME BECAUSE WE HAVE NOT TAKEN ANOTHER NOSE COUNT.

NOW IF THE EVACUTION WERE TO TAKE PLACE, FOR INSTANCE, THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW, THERE WOULD BE ANOTHER NOSE COUNT AND UPDATED. BUT WE ARE NOT SUBTRACTING AND ADDING, HOUR-BY-HOUR, JERRY.

YES.

Q. FRED, WOULD YOU SAY THAT WITH EACH DAY THAT PASSES AND THE U.S. IS UNABLE TO EFFECT AN EVACUATION FROM BEIRUT, THAT THERE WOULD BE HEIGHTENED CONCERN IN THIS BUILDING ABOUT THE U.S. CAPACITY TO DO SO?

A. NO, I DO NOT THINK I COULD SAY THAT, MARVIN.

I THINK OUR CONCERN IS ALREADY VERY HIGH, AND I WOULDN'T

PUT A TIME FACTOR ON IT. OUR CONCERN IS ALREADY VERY STRONG.

Q. ARE THERE ANY U.S. NAVAL VESSELS IN THE WATERS CLOSE TO THE LEBANESE SEAPORTS, THAT MIGHT BE USED FOR THE EVACUATION?

A. THE SIXTH FLEET, AS YOU KNOW HAS TRADITIONALLY IN A SITUATION LIKE THIS, BEEN WITHIN CALL. WHETHER IT IS WITHIN 50 MILES OR 500 MILES, I COULD NOT SAY. BUT I FEEL SURE THAT THEY ARE IN AN APPROPRIATE POSITION, JOE.

I CANNOT GIVE YOU--WE DO NOT REVEAL THE PRECISE LOCATION, OBVIOUSLY, OF THE FLEET. BUT IT IS THERE.

Q. WHAT COMES TO MY MIND IS WHETHER OR NOT THE PREPARATION UNCLASSIFIED

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FOR SEA EVACUATION MAY BE A FACTOR IN THE DELAY BECAUSE OF THE LAND GROUP BEING BARGAINED WITH THROUGH THE PLO--WHICH IS NOT SATISFACTORY.

A. I AM NOT GOING TO SPECULATE ON THAT. THAT IS YOUR IDEA.

Q. FRED.

A. YES.

Q. THE UNITED STATES, EARLIER, HAD A STATED POSITION AGAINST THE PARTITION OF LEBANON AS A SOLUTION TO THE CIVIL WAR THERE? DOES THAT POSITION STILL HOLD?

A. I WOULD LIKE TO REPEAT WHAT WE HAVE SAID BEFORE, IN ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION--THAT THE UNITED STATES IS OPPOSED TO THE PARTITION IN LEBANON. SO THE ANSWER TO THAT IS: YES.

OUR AIM REMAINS A POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION AMONG THE PARTIES WHICH WILL SUSTAIN A SOLUTION, MAINTAINING THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY, POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE, NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND UNITY OF THE COUNTRY OF LEBANON.

Q. WERE YOU ASKED YESTERDAY ABOUT THIS NUMBER TWO MAN IN THE PLO?

A. YES, I WAS, MARVIN.

Q. O.K. THANK YOU.

2. FOLLOWING IS ADDENDUM TO THE RECORD GIVEN TO JOURNALISTS IN THE PRESS ROOM FOLLOWING THE BRIEFING:

"TO CLARIFY FOR YOU OUR POSITION ON THE SECURITY SITUATION IN BEIRUT, IT IS RECOGNIZED THAT THE PALESTINIANS ARE AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN MAINTAINING SECURITY IN WEST BEIRUT. THEREFORE, ANY ARRANGEMENTS RELATING TO SECURITY NECESSARILY INVOLVES THEM. THAT IS THE WAY YOU SHOULD INTERPRET WHAT I HAVE SAID".

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IN ANSWER TO FURTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT POSSIBLE CONTACTS WITH THE PLO, THE SPOKESMAN SAID:

"IF WHAT YOU ARE GETTING AT IS WHETHER OUR POLICY TOWARD THE PLO HAS CHANGED, THE ANSWER IS NO". ROBINSON

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

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